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WASHINGTON POST
15 August 1986

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Congress Has Its Own 'Mike Deavers'

Few things in this town are more amusing than the spectacle of Congress mounting its white horse and charging forth on a lofty moral crusade—only to discover that the target of its outrage is actually a mirror.

That's what happened when the lawmakers decided something should be done to curb the growing number of high-level officials who leave federal service and cash in on their connections by becoming representatives of foreign governments.

It turned out that almost half the 76 former public servants who recently registered as foreign agents came from the halls of Congress itself.

Rep. Howard E. Wolpe (D-Mich.), introduced a bill last November that would stop the revolving door. It would prohibit former federal officials from advising or representing foreign interests for 10 years after leaving the government. Members of Congress were not included.

Wolpe always intended to include Congress and its senior staff, but he's been around Capitol Hill awhile. "We didn't want to prejudice the possibility of getting an initial hearing on the bill," he explained to our reporter Jim Lynch.

Even then, the bill didn't draw much interest in what a Wolpe aide called the "pre-Deaver days." It initially had only four cosponsors, but after the foreign consulting fees of former White House deputy chief of staff Michael K. Deaver began making headlines Wolpe's bill began to pick up support. By February, it had 50 cosponsors and by May it had more than 120 in time for its hearing.

Wolpe requested a General Accounting Office study of former high officials who recently made

the career change to foreign agent. And he asked that former members of Congress and senior staff aides be included. When the results came in, Wolpe's bill was rewritten to include congressional job switchers. He also cut the prohibition period from 10 years to four.

The GAO's list—which it stressed was not conclusive, because of loopholes in the registration law—included 32 former members of Congress and staff, 18 White House and 22 other executive agency officials and four generals.

Gray & Co., a leading public relations firm, showed how to make the right draft choices when it picked up Donald F. Massey just as he left office as the Senate sergeant-at-arms. Massey became a senior vice president.

Massey was an assistant legislative counselor in the CIA from 1974 to 1979. He then went to the Senate, where he was on the Rules Committee staff and the Joint Council on the Inauguration, chief counsel to the Appropriations Committee and sergeant-at-arms. His current duties include lobbying for Turkey, France, United Kingdom, Morocco, South Korea, Japan, Canada and the Cayman Islands.

Former Democratic senator John Culver contacts members of Congress and staff aides on behalf of his law firm's foreign clients: Liberia, France, Japan and West Germany. Former Republican House member Thomas Evans Jr. is a partner in a law firm that represents Jamaica and Cyprus. Asked for comment, Evans said the legislation would be "a deterrent for people . . . to serving in government, because of the limitations afterward."